



## Abortion Coverage for Women Enrolled in Federal Employees Health Benefits Program

The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) is the network of insurance plans that covers more than eight million federal employees, their dependents, and retirees. It was created by the Federal Employees Health Benefits Act of 1959 and has been in effect since 1960.<sup>1</sup> The FEHB Act authorizes the Office of Personnel Management to contract with qualified carriers to provide benefits. The Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill provides funding for FEHB and for almost 25 years, anti-choice lawmakers have used this legislative vehicle as an opportunity to deny women beneficiaries their right to choose:

- From 1983 to 1993, anti-choice lawmakers annually banned federal employees from choosing a health-care plan that covered abortion.
  - In 1993 and 1994, Congress reversed course and allowed federal employees to choose among health-care plans that covered abortion.<sup>2</sup> In 1994, 178 FEHB plans out of 345 offered abortion coverage.<sup>3</sup>
  - In 1995, a new anti-choice majority in Congress reinstated the ban.<sup>4</sup> It has been continued annually since.
- 
- Despite what anti-choice ideologues would have the public believe, the coverage of abortion services in federal health plans would NOT mean that abortion is being subsidized by the federal government. Currently, the government simply contributes to the premiums of federal employees in order to allow *them* to purchase private health insurance. Many American workers receive health insurance through their employers. Such benefits are part of the employees' compensation. Federal employees are no different.
  - Lifting the ban would **not mandate** abortion coverage for all federal employees. Many participating plans in the FEHB may or may not choose to include coverage for abortion services. Thus, an employee who did not wish to choose a plan with abortion coverage could do just that.
  - Knowing that the American majority opposes making abortion illegal, anti-choice members of Congress work to make obtaining an abortion more difficult and more dangerous. Singling out abortion for exclusion from health-care plans that cover other reproductive-health services is harmful to women's health and discriminates against women in public service.

January 1, 2010

**Notes:**

---

<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Federal Employees Health Benefits Program; Early Experience with a Consumer-Directed Health Plan* (November 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Adam Clymer, *Federal Employees Given Coverage for Abortions*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Aug. 4, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> CONG. REC.S10276 (daily ed. Sept. 11, 1996) (statement of Sen. Snowe).

<sup>4</sup> H.R.2020, 104th Cong. (1995) (enacted).